

Mp3 Billy X. Curmano - Billy X: Solo Set



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A blend of all cooled-out and sometimes humorous folk-blues-jazz and spoken word riffs on a variety of unusual instruments; often with strong social justice, anti-war or environmental themes. 22 MP3 Songs

FOLK: Political, FOLK: Folk Blues Details: Warning!! Contains a naughty word! "His jazz aesthetics are tasty - like a combination of Lionel Hampton and Eric Dolphy, all cooled out and almost structure-less." - Ted Johnson in La Crosse Tribune. Billy X: Solo Set (No Net) "Solo Set", the definitive Billy X., was captured as a live studio recording with no over-dubbing or cheap tricks. You could say it kind of put Billy on the high wire without a net. It's far from the usual musical mix. Sure, there's plenty going on in the vocals, melodies and rhythms to tweak the ear of even the most discerning and intelligent folk-blues-jazz and spoken word zealot, but there's a whole lot more. "Billy X: Solo Set" is a compilation of material that evolved through edgy and eccentric performances over years of living life as art. Billy X. was buried alive for three days with the words to "Epitaph" etched on his tombstone. "River Rap", "Baptize Me" and "Recycle Mantra" surfaced during his 2,000 plus mile Mississippi River swim as both performance and environmental statement. "Genesis 9:1.1" followed a 40 day fast in Death Valley in his search for the spiritual in art. He's toured just about every way imaginable including 6,200 miles and 15 cities in 45 days on a Greyhound Bus. He comes by his overall anti-war and social justice themes honestly. He's witnessed the stupidity and horrors of war on two continents, the insides of a jail house looking out and the poverty that grips our world. Billy X. Curmano is an award winning performance artist. A new traditionalist that uses an unusual blend of jazz inspired performance, poetry, music and movement along with an odd assortment of instruments to create what he sometimes refers to as "riff-rap". Twenty-two cuts in 72 minutes highlight his passion for dulcimer, guitar, mbira, ocean harp, vibraphone and both the sung and spoken word. His heady mix of forms has intrigued audiences from the Dalai Lama's World

Festival of Sacred Music in Los Angeles and New York City's famed Franklin Furnace to Austria's Vienna Secession and "more than plenty" of points between. Mary Beth Crain described his auto-biographical Adventures with Billy in a "Performance Pick of the Week" article for the LA Weekly: "He's the only human being in recorded history to claim the distinction of swimming the entire length of the Mississippi River. He was buried alive for three days in a much ballyhooed effort to bring art to the spirit world that included a New Orleans-style funeral complete with Christlike resurrection. He once imprisoned himself in a tiger cage to protest the inhumane treatment of POWs in Vietnam. Maverick? Eccentric? Full-blown madman? Billy X. Curmano will be delighted to let you decide. For the past 27 years the Minnesota-based performance artist/environmental activist - who earned an M.S. in sculpture from the University of Wisconsin and has had exhibits and installations in the U.S., Japan, Spain and Austria - has been a fixture in the public consciousness of the Midwest (journalists have described him as "the court jester of Southeastern Minnesota") and has earned praise around the world for his creative vision and politically directed artistic consciousness. "I don't consider myself an extremist," the bushy-headed, mustachioed Curmano mused during a TV interview. "Actually, I'm a conservative living in extreme times." This weekend Curmano ventures forth from his farmhouse in Rushford, Minnesota, base of operations for his Experimental Artwork Terminal #1, to make a rare live appearance in L.A. His show, entitled Adventures with Billy, is an obstreperous blend of monologue, video, slide projection and live music chronicling his most famous achievements. Among these are his swim of the entire 2,500 miles of the Mississippi, from Lake Itasca, Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico, a ten-year-long performance piece/activist statement designed to inspire people toward awareness and respect for "water, the source of life"; his self-imposed interment, where he spent three Houdini-esque days in a coffin six feet under (cheating a bit with full life-support systems on hand); and his delightful Cow-a-Bongo: Bongo Bovine, in which Curmano and his band staged a jazz/pop performance for a herd of bewildered cows in the wilds of rural Minnesota, witnessed by an equally bewildered audience aboard a tour bus to the site. Curmano calls Adventures with Billy "a slightly satirical journey documenting art as life and life as art." I call it an uninhibited blend of courage, charisma and chutzpah, the sort of thing you either love or hate but definitely aren't allowed to regard with, God forbid, neutrality." (LA Weekly, Vol. 21 #12, Feb. 1999) Billy X. has five other compact discs out on the XART Audio label. "Amanita" and "Doozy" are primarily instrumental and moody folk-jazz arrangements with long-time collaborator John Pendergast. He co-founded the free-jazz collective, New X

Art Ensemble featuring the Amazing Tess Toster Tones, with D. L. Hunt and Steve Smith. Their material is unpredictable and ranges from classical to blues, rock, funk and jazz with a nod to alternative before each style. They recorded a highly improvisational studio album, "New X: Trios Duets", and the live at Rascals CD, "New X: Fresh X". After the tapes sold out, they dug back into their archives to re-release, "New X: Xmas". No one, but no one, deconstructs Xmas like New X in this irreverent boombox recording and former cassette-only release. Thoughtfully, they retained all its spirit and low tech glory with an equally lo-fidelity replication to compact disc. Mike Starling summed it up in LaX, "A word of caution: If Bing Crosby singing "White Christmas" or Andy Williams singing about chestnuts and open fires is your cup of Christmas carol tea, avoid this tape! However, if musicmakers like Ornette Coleman and the Art Ensemble of Chicago appeal to you, this may just be the weirded-out take on holiday music you're looking for." Curmano's musical tastes are original and eclectic. His poetry and compositions segue into free form improvisations or haunting repetitive musical phrasing. Collaborations with the New X Art Ensemble, Fly Agaric and other musicians on numerous original scores for film and video soundtracks led to the 2002 "Hampton Award for Excellence in Film Digital Media". He's been a McKnight Foundation Interdisciplinary Art Fellow and during his 2,000 mile swim, he was honored with numerous civic awards including "Billy X. Curmano Day" in St. Louis, Cape Girardeau and New Orleans. Did I say, "Swim" ? ? ?

The Milwaukee Journal: "It's not a race. But is it art? A quarry operation tops a Missouri bluff a few miles south of Cape Girardeau. As Billy swam by, he improvised a rhyming rap on hammering and cutting and grinding, in the hard-rock rhythms of quarrying. His audience of four paddled in amused silence as he concluded gracefully: "And now, the percussion bridge..." Right on cue, the quarriers took it away, the sound of their work suddenly vivid and interesting. Then the grand finale: Some workers noticed us and started waving, and the truck drivers started blowing their horns. They'd probably seen Billy on TV.

Curmano is scrupulous to the point of obsession. He cannot eat or drink while in the river, but he craves hard candies. To supply him, we sidle up very close, and Tom or Debra pops a piece into his mouth. He treads water during these delicate maneuvers-grabbing the canoe for even a second would, in Billy's mind, be cheating. Curmano jokes about his "water ballet," but The Swim is a kind of dance, complete with moods and phrases and variations. In one fast stretch of water, he somehow planted his feet on a channel buoy and played a jazzy conga solo on it. Then he pushed off and whirled away in the current, hooting and turning and playing on the surface, happy as an otter."-Tom Strini, Journal dance Critic, The

Milwaukee Journal, Aug. 14, 1994. He's been compared to the likes of P.T. Barnum, Andy Warhol, Marcel DuChamp and a happy otter. Recording Engineer: Dr. Kevin Dobbe Special thanks to Rochester Community and Technical College and the use of Studio A

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